

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF NEVADA**

STEELMAN PARTNERS, a Nevada limited liability partnership, ) Case No. 2:09-cv-01016-ECR-GWF  
Plaintiff, )  
vs. )  
SANYA GAOSHENG INVESTMENT )  
COMPANY, LTD., a Hong Kong corporation, )  
Defendants. )  
PROTECTIVE ORDER  
GOVERNING CONFIDENTIALITY  
OF DOCUMENTS

**PROTECTIVE ORDER**  
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**OF DOCUMENTS**

The parties submitted a Stipulation and [Proposed] Protective Order (#36) which the Court reviewed and entered. This order modifies the parties' stipulated protective order with respect to any documents filed or submitted with any dispositive motions filed in this case, and with respect to any documents the parties seek to maintain as confidential for purposes of identification in the joint pretrial order.

The Court has approved the parties' blanket protective order to facilitate the parties' discovery exchanges. However, the parties have not made an individualized showing that a protective order is necessary to protect their secret or other confidential information or established that disclosure would cause an identifiable, significant harm. The Ninth Circuit has recently examined the presumption of public access to judicial files and records and held that parties seeking to maintain the secrecy of documents attached to dispositive motions must show compelling reasons sufficient to overcome the presumption of public access. *See, Kamakana v. City and County of Honolulu*, 447 F.3d 1172, 1180 (9th Cir. 2006). Accordingly, the Court has approved the parties' stipulation but will require that any party seeking to seal attachments to a motion for summary judgment or other dispositive motion or documents identified in the joint pretrial order shall be required to seek further leave of Court.

1           **A.        Protective Orders**

2           Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(c) permits the court in which an action is pending to “make any order  
 3 which justice requires to protect the party or person from annoyance, embarrassment, oppression or  
 4 undue burden or expense” upon motion by a party or a person from whom discovery is sought. The  
 5 burden of persuasion under Fed. R. Civ. P. 26(c) is on the party seeking the protective order.  
 6 *Cipollone v. Liggett Group, Inc.*, 785 F.2d 1108, 1121 (3d Cir. 1986). To meet that burden of  
 7 persuasion, the party seeking the protective order must show good cause by demonstrating a  
 8 particular need for the protection sought. *Beckman Indus., Inc., v. Int'l. Ins. Co.*, 966 F.2d 470, 476  
 9 (9th Cir. 1992). Rule 26(c) requires more than “broad allegations of harm, unsubstantiated by  
 10 specific examples or articulated reasoning.” *Id.*, citing *Cipollone v. Liggett*. “A party asserting  
 11 good cause bears the burden, for each particular document it seeks to protect, of showing that  
 12 prejudice or harm will result if no protective order is granted.” *Foltz v. State Farm*, 331 F.3d 1122,  
 13 1130 (9th Cir. 2003), citing *San Jose Mercury News, Inc., v. District Court*, 187 F.3d 1096, 1102  
 14 (9th Cir. 1999).

15           In *Seattle Times Co. v. Rhinehart*, the Supreme Court interpreted the language of Fed. R.  
 16 Civ. P. 26(c) conferring “broad discretion on the trial court to decide when a protective order is  
 17 appropriate and what degree of protection is required.” 467 U.S. 20, 36 (1984). The Supreme Court  
 18 acknowledged that the “trial court is in the best position to weigh fairly the competing needs and  
 19 interests of the parties affected by discovery. The unique character of the discovery process requires  
 20 that the trial court have substantial latitude to fashion protective orders.” *Id.* Although the trial  
 21 court has broad discretion in fashioning protective orders, the Supreme Court has also recognized “a  
 22 general right to inspect and copy public records and documents, including judicial records and  
 23 documents.” *Nixon v. Warner Communications*, 435 U.S. 589, 597 (1978). However, the common  
 24 law right to inspect and copy judicial records is not absolute. *Id.* Thus, the Supreme Court  
 25 concluded, “[e]very court has supervisory power of its own records and files, and access has been  
 26 denied where the court files might have become a vehicle for improper purposes.” *Id.*

27           **B.        The Presumption of Public Access**

28           Unless court records are of the type “traditionally kept secret” the Ninth Circuit recognizes a

1 “strong presumption in favor of access.” *Foltz v. State Farm Mutual Auto Insurance Company*, 331  
 2 F.3d 1122, 1135 (citing *Hagestad v. Tragesser*, 49 F.3d 1430, 1434 (9th Cir. 1995)). Grand jury  
 3 transcripts and warrant materials involved in pre-indictment investigations are two categories of  
 4 documents and records which have “traditionally been kept secret for important policy reasons.”  
 5 *Times Mirror Co. v. United States*, 873 F.2d 1210, 1219 (9th Cir. 1989). Although the federal  
 6 common law right of access exists, it “does not mandate disclosure in all cases.” *San Jose Mercury*  
 7 *News, Inc.*, 187 F.3d at 1102. The strong presumption in favor of public access recognized by the  
 8 Ninth Circuit “can be overcome by sufficiently important countervailing interests.” *Id.*

9           **1.        Pretrial Discovery**

10        In the Ninth Circuit, “[i]t is well-established that the fruits of pretrial discovery are, in the  
 11 absence of a court order to the contrary, presumptively public.” *San Jose Mercury News v. United*  
 12 *States District Court*, 187 F.3d 1096, 1103 (9th Cir. 1999). Thus, the Ninth Circuit concluded,  
 13 “[g]enerally, the public can gain access to litigation documents and information produced during  
 14 discovery unless the party opposing disclosure shows ‘good cause’ why a protective order is  
 15 necessary.” *Phillips v. General Motors*, 307 F.3d 1206, 1210 (9th Cir. 2002). “For good cause to  
 16 exist, the party seeking protection bears the burden of showing specific prejudice or harm will result  
 17 if no protective order is granted.” *Id.* at 1210-11. Or, as the Ninth Circuit articulated the standard in  
 18 *Foltz*, “[t]he burden is on the party requesting a protective order to demonstrate that (1) the material  
 19 in question is a trade secret or other confidential information within the scope of Rule 26(c) and (2)  
 20 disclosure would cause an identifiable, significant harm.” *Foltz* at 1131, quoting *Deford v. Schmid*  
 21 *Prods. Co.*, 120 F.R.D. 648, 653 (D. Md. 1987). “If a court finds particularized harm will result  
 22 from disclosure of information to the public, then it balances the public and private interests to  
 23 decide whether a protective order is necessary.” *Id.* at 1211 (citing *Glenmede Trust Co. v.*  
 24 *Thompson*, 56 F.3d 476, 483 (3d Cir. 1995)).

25           **2.        Sealed Discovery Documents**

26        In *Phillips*, the Ninth Circuit carved out an exception to the presumption of public access,  
 27 holding that the presumption does not apply to materials filed with the court under seal subject to a  
 28 valid protective order. 307 F.3d at 1213. The *Phillips* decision relied on the *Seattle Times* decision

1 in concluding that protective orders restricting disclosure of discovery materials which are not  
 2 admitted in evidence do not violate the public right of access to traditionally public sources of  
 3 information. *Id.* at 1213 (*quoting, Seattle Times*, 467 U.S. at 33). The Ninth Circuit reasoned that  
 4 the presumption of public access was rebutted because a district court had already determined that  
 5 good cause existed to protect the information from public disclosure by balancing the need for  
 6 discovery against the need for confidentiality in issuing the protective order. *Id.* Therefore, “when a  
 7 party attaches a sealed discovery document to a non-dispositive motion, the usual presumption of  
 8 the public’s right of access is rebutted.”

9                   **3.        Materials Attached to Dispositive Motions**

10                  The Ninth Circuit recently and comprehensively examined the presumption of public access  
 11 to judicial files and records in *Kamakana v. City and County of Honolulu*, 447 F.3d 1172 (9th Cir.  
 12 2006). There, the court recognized that different interests are at stake in preserving the secrecy of  
 13 materials produced during discovery and materials attached to dispositive motions. Citing *Phillips*  
 14 and *Foltz*, the *Kamakana* decision reiterated that a protective order issued under the Rule 26(c) may  
 15 be issued once a particularized showing of good cause exists for preserving the secrecy of discovery  
 16 materials. “Rule 26(c) gives the district court much flexibility in balancing and protecting the  
 17 interests of private parties.” 447 F.3d at 1180. The *Kamakana* court, therefore, held that a “good  
 18 cause” showing is sufficient to seal documents produced in discovery. *Id.*

19                  However, the *Kamakana* decision also held that a showing of “compelling reasons” is  
 20 needed to support the secrecy of documents attached to dispositive motions. A showing of “good  
 21 cause” does not,  
 22 without more, satisfy the “compelling reasons” test required to maintain the secrecy of documents  
 23 attached to dispositive motions. *Id.* The court found that:

24                  Different interests are at stake with the right of access than with  
 25 Rule 26(c); with the former, the private interests of the litigants are  
 26 not the only weights on the scale. Unlike private materials unearthed  
 27 during discovery, judicial records are public documents almost by  
 28 definition, and the public is entitled to access by default. (Citation  
 omitted). This fact sharply tips the balance in favor of production  
 when a document formally sealed for good cause under Rule 26(c)  
 becomes part of the judicial record. Thus, a “good cause” showing  
 alone will not suffice to fulfill the “compelling reasons” standard that

1 a party must meet to rebut the presumption of access to dispositive  
2 pleadings and attachments.

3 *Id. Kamakana* recognized that “compelling reasons” sufficient to outweigh the public’s interests in  
4 disclosure and justify sealing records exist when court records may be used to gratify private spite,  
5 permit public scandal, circulate libelous statements, or release trade secrets. *Id.* at 1179 (internal  
6 quotations omitted). However, “[t]he mere fact that the production of records may lead to a  
7 litigant’s embarrassment, incrimination, or exposure to further litigation will not, without more,  
8 compel the court to seal its records.” *Id.*, citing, *Foltz*, 331 F.3d at 1136. To justify sealing  
9 documents attached to dispositive motions, a party is required to present articulable facts identifying  
10 the interests favoring continuing secrecy *and* show that these specific interests overcome the  
11 presumption of public access by outweighing the public’s interests in understanding the judicial  
12 process. *Id.* at 1181 (internal citations and quotations omitted).

13 For all of the foregoing reasons,

14 **IT IS ORDERED:**

15 1. No documents which are filed with the court as attachments to a summary judgment  
16 or other dispositive motion, or documents which are identified in the joint pretrial order, may be  
17 filed under seal unless the proponent seeking protected status of the document(s) establishes  
18 “compelling reasons” to rebut the presumption of public access.

19 2. Any party seeking to seal attachments to a motion for summary judgment or other  
20 dispositive motion filed with the court, or documents which are identified in the joint pretrial order,  
21 shall submit a separate memorandum of points and authorities which presents articulable facts  
22 identifying the interests favoring continuing the secrecy of the attachments, and shows that these  
23 specific interests outweigh the public’s interests in disclosure sufficient to overcome the  
24 presumption of public access to dispositive pleadings and attachments.

25 3. Any application to seal documents attached to a motion for summary judgment or  
26 other dispositive motion, or documents identified in the joint pretrial order, shall be served on  
27 opposing counsel together with the documents proposed to be filed under seal. Opposing counsel  
28 shall have **fifteen (15) days** from service of any application to seal documents attached to a motion

1 for summary judgment or other dispositive motion, or documents identified in the joint pretrial  
2 order, in which to file a response.

3 **IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that in regard to discovery and other non-dispositive  
4 motions, only those portions of the motion, response or reply pleadings which contain specific  
5 reference to the contents of confidential documents or information, and the exhibits which contain  
6 such confidential information, shall be filed under seal. The remainder of the pleading and other  
7 exhibits, which do not contain confidential information, shall be filed as publicly accessible  
8 documents unless otherwise specifically ordered by the court.

9 DATED this 10th day of August, 2010.

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12 GEORGE FOLEY, JR.  
13 United States Magistrate Judge  
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